

KITCHEN FINISHES – YOUR OPTIONS



There have been remarkable innovations in kitchen finishes from the most basic of materials like melamine to the most expensive like timber and duco.

Melamine has been associated with the more cost effective kitchen but this is no longer the case. Technology has allowed manufacturers to develop product that is highly realistic to the eye (particularly wood grain) and very durable. Most kitchens will have some melamine in them because carcassing is usually made of melamine. New developments in melamine now make it possible to have a very high end look at a more cost effective price.

High pressure laminate tops better known by a brand called Formica are often combined with melamine. With the growing popularity of stone tops these tops are seen as a cost effective option. However, with increased technology, these tops are now a viable alternative with finishes in a variety of timber and granite effects. The new looks are very convincing but are available at a fraction of the cost of real stone or timber.

Wrap technology, where a 'foil' is adhered to a door structure with heat, a vacuum process and in some cases high pressure, is cost effective, easy to maintain and available in a variety of finishes. Its easy maintenance makes it attractive for use where there are small children or in rented premises. The quality of the foils available and

developments in the vacuum sealing process have ironed out the problems of delaminating and shrinkage that were seen when the product first entered the market. The arrival of high gloss foils has meant that wrap can now compete with laminates and lacquered doors.

Laminate products offer all the ease of maintenance that you find with melamine but with a more expensive, sophisticated finish. The finish has been particularly popular for clients looking for a high gloss effect. Where possible one should look for the product in its high pressure form as this will offer better durability to scratching and impact. It is vital that this product is correctly edged. If not the dark seams left by the edging can be unsightly and the edging can delaminate.

Timber has had a huge revival and is often combined with other products like wrap, laminate or duco to give a contemporary and stylish finish. With the cost of timber soaring veneer has become the sensible timber option. Veneer is where a thin layer of timber is bonded to a less expensive material. This process allows timber to be more cost effective and more sustainable.

When opting for a kitchen with timber you should embrace the variances in colour and pattern. It is difficult and costly to match colour and grain precisely in the manufacturing process. Doors and tops need to be properly treated to



ensure longevity. It is also important to note that should you need to replace a part of the kitchen the timber will be a different colour. The timber will change colour over time to become more like the existing kitchen as it is exposed to the sun and the elements in the kitchen.

Timber tops are still a firm favourite. Timber tops will scratch even when sealed. With a sealed top the sealant gets fine scratches in it with daily use. These can be made less obvious to the eye with wax based cleaners like Mr. Min. If you opt not to seal the tops then you must see your work surfaces like a butcher's block. They will mark and absorb stains.

Advances in spraying technique and equipment, and in paint, have allowed the **lacquered finish or 'duco'** to be a durable option for the kitchen. It is a popular choice for your high end kitchen. It is important to know where this product is coming from as it is specialized and takes skill to manufacture. If the door is not painted and dried properly the finish can be compromised. With the arrival of water based paints suitable for this technique your doors can also be considered environmentally friendly.

Stone tops often accompany other high end finishes. Whether engineered or natural stone they will be more expensive. Granite varies drastically in price depending on where the stone is mined. Engineered stone is a man

made alternative to granite. It echoes many of the properties of natural stone but with more consistency in colouration and patterning. It is important to note that you should not expose stone to high heat and that spills of highly coloured foods like wine and beetroot can stain it.

Another recent addition to the industry as an option for tops is **solid surfacing**. This is another man made product. It has good resilience to heat and scratching and is very resistant to staining. Its one major asset over natural and engineered stone is that it can be moulded into almost any shape and offered flexibility if you are looking for curves and bends.

With all these choices at our fingertips your desired look and feel can be achieved in a multitude of ways all with different cost implications. It is important to know how much you are prepared to spend before meeting with the kitchen company. This will enable the kitchen designer to select the best finishes for your budget. You should allow the kitchen design specialist to advise you on what options will work best for your lifestyle, budget and aesthetic preferences.